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SOURCE L'Orient.

MILITARY PREPARATIONS IN THE GDR

The 8 April 1953 issue of the Beirut French daily newspaper L'Orient published an article by Paul Ravoux on military preparations in the German Democratic Republic, a summary of which follows. Figures given in brackets are cited for comparison.

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Garrisoned police units now have 120,000 [50,000] men, half of whom are recent recruits, receiving their primary instructions in 14 schools and 24 instruction units. To this number must be added the frontier police, a kind of gendarmerie, which is intermediate between the actual police and the armed forces. The frontier police now has about 25,000 men.

The garrisoned units form a group called the Army Corps North. It is stationed in Pomerania between the Oder River and the Mecklenburg lakes, in the region between Ruegen and Pasewalk, to the west of Szczecin. It has two infantry divisions and one armored division. The infantry divisions are not yet motorized because of a lack of vehicles. They will be modeled after the Soviet motorized divisions, having three infantry regiments, each with a battalion of tanks. In addition they [the infantry divisions] will have a regiment of medium tanks, a regiment of heavy tanks, an artillery regiment, an antiaircraft-artillery regiment, a motorcycle battalion, a transmission battalion [possibly signal corps], an engineer battalion, a mortar regiment, and a transport and quartermaster battalion.

Development of these divisions is now taking place. The equipment of arms was completed during the past months. Information on this subject from West German sources varies; the weekly Der Spiegel recently declared that the Army Corps North had 400 T 34 tanks, but other sources in contact with Theodor Blank's [unidentified] department give higher figures. According to the latter, the Army Corps North now has 700 T 34 tanks and 100 Stalin heavy tanks, in addition to 150 turreted assault guns with caterpillar tread.

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Outside of the armored weapons, motorization of the divisions exists only on paper. They have only a few light vehicles for the general staff and a small number of trucks for the quartermaster service. The Soviet Army is temporarily furnishing vehicles for instruction purposes; and up to now, the German Democratic Republic does not seem able to produce trucks and military tractors by itself.

Tests with IFA tractors, constructed in the old and now nationalized Auto Union factories in Chemnitz, have been discontinued. IFA does not produce motors nor truck chassis. The last trucks made by the plant were military trucks for the USSR made with a stock of Maybach motors coming from the former Wehrmacht. The Phaenomen factory in Zittau produces only light trucks; the BMW (Bayrische Motorwerke, Bavarian Motor Works) in Eisenach now makes only a line of vehicles with six-cylinder, 2-liter motors; they are too delicate and light to be used as military vehicles. However attempts have been made to construct vehicles good for any terrain using this motor.

The difficulty in supplying automobiles to mechanized units is the main obstacle which slows down the motorization of the GDR armed forces. The GDR industries are not sufficiently adequate, and up to now, it does not seem that the USSR, Poland, or Czechoslovakia has offered to contribute.

The GDR aviation forces number 5,000  $\sqrt{4,300}$  men in three regiments, which are still undergoing instruction in air schools for YAK planes. A West German source affirms that MIG 15 instruction is to begin next. A German source specializing in false rumors has recently disclaimed all probability that the British Lincoln bomber shot down in the GDR near the Elbe River was brought down by GDR aviators in MIG 15s.

The maritime police, besides the maritime gendarmerie attached to the frontier police, has 10,000  $\sqrt{6,000}$  estimated men and a number of small boats, mine sweepers, and patrol boats of the former German Navy. The maritime police is of insignificant tactical value.

It appears from this West German information, which could be exaggerated, that the armed forces of the GDR are being organized slowly, especially concerning materiel.

Only one army corps made up of three mixed divisions is set up with its cadres and tactical development. It is far from being easily put into action, for it is stationed the farthest from the line of demarcation along the coast of the Baltic Sea. The formation of a central army corps, presumably to be stationed west of Berlin in the area between Dessau and Erfurt, is now in the project stage, as is the formation of a southern army to the east of Dresden. According to certain indications, the new army corps are to be formed by breaking up the present Army Corps North.

The total strength and the order of battle of the Soviet occupation troops have not been appreciably modified in 3 years. The occupation troops are composed of 22 divisions, of which 8 are armored, 4 are infantry, and 10 are motorized. The total strength is about 350,000 men. The figure of 800 MIG fighters recently given *Der Spiegel* is certainly exaggerated. Soviet aviation in Germany has 1,200 planes, of which 560 are MIG 15s and 150 are jet tactical bombers.

In short, since the end of last year, there is no indication of a Soviet or German military menace to the Federal Republic in the West. But it is certain that when West Germany starts concrete military preparations, the East will be able to use trained armed forces immediately.

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